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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002013

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PDAS RIES DISCUSSIONS WITH TURKEY ON EU ACCESSION
BID

(U) Classified by ADCM Scot Marciel for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: In March 31 Ankara meetings, EUR/PDAS Charlie Ries 1) discussed opportunities for U.S. support of Turkey's EU candidacy and 2) encouraged a renewed GOT emphasis on meeting Copenhagen criteria. Ries noted that high profile solutions including, e.g., reopening Halki Seminary, removing restrictions on minority religious and linguistic freedoms, judicial modernization and resolution of the Leyla Zana case, would help the EU find a way to say yes to Turkey. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Deputy Chairman for Research and Development Reha Denemec pointed to recent progress in Cyprus and to AKP-championed legislative action as proof of his party's "sincere" commitment to EU accession. According to Denemec, the AKP-lead GOT will do all it can to meet the Copenhagen criteria. Denemec asserted that even if some reforms are delayed, Turkey has earned a date based on its demonstrated commitment to reform. Denemec noted that a date to begin negotiations would strengthen confidence and encourage further reform. Comment: Denemec lacked specific details about Turkey's EU accession efforts.

3. (C) According to Burhan Kuzu, AK MP and Parliamentary Constitution Committee Chairman, "Except for a few details, Turkey has almost completed implementing the EU criteria." Like Denemec, Kuzu points to pre-EU Spain as an example for Turkey's accession hopes, "I know the EU process well and I remember the accession of Spain -- I can tell you that the conditions in Spain were not close to Turkey's current condition. If Turkey is not given a date in December, there's nothing we can do to gain the EU's confidence." Kuzu warned that failure at the EU's December summit will likely reverse any progress Turkey has already made toward implementing EU accession criteria.

4. (C) Irish Ambassador Sean Whelan characterized the EU's upcoming Regular Report on Turkey as a "big wakeup call" for Turkish accession aspirations. "The report will take a hard line on human rights," Whelan noted. "Police brutality and unfair market practices are still common." Whelan asserted that the GOT's "instinctive approach" to EU accession is typical but off-base, "The Turks are telling the EU that they'll fix their problems once they get a date. We're telling the Turks that they need to fix their problems before they get a date." Still, Whelan opines that there is a broad consensus growing in the EU and it looks good for Turkey.

5. (C) Ambassador Murat Sungar, Head of the Secretariat General for EU Affairs, observed that even if Turkey doesn't get a date, "We made changes that are good for the country." Echoing Ambassador Whelan's observations, Sungar admitted that: "Turkey still has a long way to go and implementation is a problem." Sungar noted that the Turkish judiciary will be the biggest domestic obstacle to reform - particularly in relation to revamping the criminal justice system. However, Sungar contends, if the negotiations begin, many problems "will evaporate." Sungar asserts that failure in December will have serious repercussions on public perception of EU accession aspirations.

6. (C) As in previous meetings, Ries stressed to Volkan Bozkir, MFA Deputy U/S for EU Relations, U.S. support for Turkish accession. The more Turkey accomplishes in upcoming months, Ries noted, the more effective U.S. assistance will be. Bozkir replied that the GOT is in regular contact with the Commission and fully understands Commission expectations. However, he warned, some reforms such as the planned amendments to Turkey's penal code, while desirable, may not be accomplished this year for bureaucratic reasons. The GOT is working toward a solution to the Halki seminary issue, abolishment of State Security Courts, and Kurdish broadcasting rights, possible hurdles Ries noted. The case of Leyla Zana and three other Kurdish former MPs was returned to the original judge who refused to release her since the charges related to contacts with a terrorist group. If it

were up to the GOT, Bozkir asserted, Zana would have been released long ago. The problem with providing legal status to religious foundations is the fear that this could lead to the introduction of radical Islamic organizations that would violate Turkey's secular nature.

17. (C) Bozkir noted that U.S. support for Turkey's EU ambitions was key to Turkey's success at the December 2002 EU summit. Bozkir asked for continued support and requested the U.S. intervene with Austria, the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and new Member States. However, Bozkir suggested it might be best for the U.S. not to lobby Germany and France. According to Bozkir, Germany changed its position and now is working with Turkey quite effectively. Opposition CDU/CSU leader Angela Merkel's position has been evolving as well since her visit. She is no longer blocking AK observers to the European Parliament. Austria still has difficulties, but will not block a consensus if it sees itself as isolated. The Dutch government is split but will be required to seek consensus in its upcoming EU Presidency role. Bozkir is concerned about Poland's position, but early conversations have been quite positive.

18. (C) Bozkir reported that the GOT has created and funded an "EU Communications Group" of government officials, MPs, civil society and university participants to engage public opinion makers throughout all 25 EU member states. A delegation from this group will travel to France. The PM and FM continue to travel extensively. MPs from the Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, and EU Committees and bilateral intra-parliamentary relations groups were also traveling constantly. Turkey is additionally facilitating the visits of officials and MPs from EU member states. AK has forged close relations with the EPP group in the European Parliament.

19. (U) EUR/PDAS Ries did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.
EDELMAN